



FEMA

Partnership, Program, Persistence Watershed Buyout Plan

Neosho, MO - Although far removed from both the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the City of Neosho, had a long history of flooding. In the 1960s, the Hickory Creek Watershed (and especially the High School Branch which runs directly through the City) was not sufficient enough to carry runoff water in severe storms. Average annual flood damages to homes, businesses, public facilities, roads, and bridges totaled \$855,500.

Armed with documented statistics, the City developed a watershed agreement in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The agreement was designed to eliminate the flood-rebuild-flood cycle within the City via a buyout of several residential and commercial properties and the construction of 11 floodwater retention dams. During Missouri's Great Flood of 1993, the City experienced unprecedented flood damage. The Watershed Plan, already developed, was in desperate need of execution.

Following the 1993 flood, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds became available and the City of Neosho was able to acquire 52 residential properties. The buy-out program received overwhelming community support. An additional 26 property owners wanted to participate in the buyout program, but unfortunately the HMGP funds were not sufficient enough to meet all known needs.

In Aug. 1997, the citizens of Neosho decided to take control of their own destiny and passed a 3/8 cent sales tax for park, recreation, and storm drainage projects. Nations Bank agreed to finance up to \$1.5 million in bonds to complete the flood-buyout program. The City obtained a 4.51 percent interest rate and recently approved the first issue of nearly \$1.4 million. Nineteen properties have been targeted for the first issue. The \$203,000 generated through the tax and approximately \$120,000 of an already existing transportation tax will be used to pay off the bank note.

City officials have mentioned over and over again that the flood buyout program proved to the community that hazard mitigation makes sense. The HMGP was the "jump start" the City needed. Since the buyout program the NRCS has now committed the needed funds to complete the floodwater-retention dams. A partnership, a program, and persistence by City officials have forever changed the way the City deals with its flood risk.



**Newton County,
Missouri**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$1,800,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)